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Maintenance and non-maintenance of community language in immigrant families: the case of Polish parents in the UK

This paper examines Polish immigrant parents' perceptions of the value of their community language, the factors that shape and reshape their approaches to their children's language education, and the different outcomes on the spectrum of language maintenance and non-maintenance that parents achieve. It focuses on the empirical findings derived from qualitative data collected in interviews with parents and interprets them with reference to Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, social field, and habitus. This paper argues that a better understanding of the complexity of migrants' experiences of language and their diverse needs can be enabled by a closer analysis of the ways in which different forms of capital interact and transform in response to the broader socio-cultural environment within which they undergo valuation. At the same time, it emphasises migrants' agency and suggests that the negative impact of anti-migration discourses and social structures on migrants' family language policies and practices should not be assumed as, in certain contexts, migrants tend to be more responsive to the micro-scale family predispositions than the wider socio-political context.

Keywords: community languages, cultural capital, decision making, educational practices, migration, parents

Introduction

Discourses on migration and community language² education can vary from nation to nation. Migrants, as they resettle and travel across geographical borders, traverse the socio-political contexts of both their country of origin and their host country. At the same time, they may also experience instances of direct or structural violence associated with negative connotations linked to the migrant status popularised alongside the widespread rise of nationalism in the West (Doerr 2017). Under these circumstances, often exacerbated by negative feelings and discourse at the local and community levels, professing certain religious beliefs, belonging to a non-dominant ethnic group, or, indeed, speaking a foreign language have become, perhaps even more than before, an embodied marker of difference and non-belonging in the UK (Tyrrell et al. 2018; Welply 2017a). In such an environment, where politicians call for a move away from multiculturalism (see Kinnock 2016), immigrants and their children face numerous challenges as they negotiate the value of their cultural capital, knowing that compared to what is recognised by the British society as valuable and legitimate, their own languages and resources are misrecognised and seen as superordinate (May 2012). Polish migrants, following the 2004 EU enlargement, have formed one of the largest minority groups in the UK (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva 2017), and thus, have had an impact on the country's linguistic landscape. According to the Population Census 2011, Polish—after English—is the second most commonly spoken language in England, Wales and Scotland (ONS 2013). Given such a large size of the Polish cohort and the

² Community languages (also referred to as 'minority', 'home', or 'heritage' languages) are languages spoken by members of minority communities within a majority language context. In the migration context, community languages refer to mother tongues that immigrants used to speak in their country of origin (Extra and Yagmur 2004).

high level of prevalence of the Polish language in the UK, generalisations and stereotyping in public and political discourse, inevitably, misrepresent the diverse character of this group. To avoid reinforcing these assumptions about migrants' origins and experiences of mobility and resettlement contexts, in this paper, I take a step back and ask whether there is, indeed, something unique about identifying and being identified as Polish in the UK. As I take a look at language and language transmission in family, I pay attention to both the role of the larger socio-political context and the micro-scale family predispositions and interactions. Instead of searching for similarities between studied families (cf. Curdt-Christiansen 2009), I bring attention to the uniqueness of each case and suggest that decisions about language transmission in family are formed at the intersection of large- and micro-scale influences and I argue that in the case of Polish families the micro-scale, individualised, and non-national (i.e. not related to being Polish in the UK) influences might, indeed, play a more significant role.

The study reported in this paper examines how the Polish language is recognised and valorised as cultural capital within immigrant families and how parents' decisions and approaches to children's language education are shaped and reshaped. The notion of reshaping is particularly important, here, as it highlights the malleable character of family language policies and practices. To complement literature on heritage language maintenance (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen 2009; Kwon 2017; Mu 2014), I study maintenance alongside "non-maintenance"—or language neglect—and focus on the complexity of parents' unique capital assemblages, while recognising a variety of outcomes on the spectrum of maintenance/non-maintenance that parents may, intentionally or not, achieve (cf. K. King and Fogle 2006). The key argument here is that, in order to understand the complexity of migrants' experiences of language and

devise educational practices that support their diverse needs, it is crucial to recognise the ways in which different forms of capital interact—hence, conceptualising migrants’ capital resources as “assemblages”—and to what extent they are subject to transformation in response to the broader socio-cultural environment within which they undergo valuation. Bourdieu’s theory of practice formulates a point of departure for this sociological enquiry and provides a framework for uncovering complex cultural, symbolic, and socio-spatial distinctions that shape the heterogeneity of immigrants’ experiences and their relationship with community languages. The application of the Bourdieusian lens moves the analysis beyond more perfunctory ‘language use’ approaches and enables the interpretation of language as a resource to be valorised as well as an embodied medium of belonging, or non-belonging, to the social settings individuals occupy (Bourdieu 1991, 1977b). The paper focuses on the empirical findings of the study and interprets them with reference to Bourdieu’s concepts. It does not, however, intend to provide an extensive critique of the theory of practice as this has been done previously (Erel 2010 with reference to migration; Joas and Knöbl 2011; Robbins 2005).

Theoretical framework and research context

Bourdieu’s theory of practice distinguishes three principal forms of capital—‘economic’ which refers to money, property, and assets, ‘social’ that describes interpersonal connections and networks, as well as social obligation and recognition, and ‘cultural’ relating to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the possession of cultural goods and professional qualifications, as well as the adaptation of particular lifestyles. Whereas, in this paper, linguistics ability is interpreted as an element of cultural capital, it is not the intention to label it and consider in isolation from other forms of capital. Quite the contrary, here, I emphasise ‘cultural capital’ as a relational

concept. Bourdieu's (1986, 241) capital coexists and interacts with other capitals and operates within the 'regularities of the social world inscribed in [its] objective and subjective structures'. It has been suggested that moving forward, migration research should place a greater emphasis on recognising the intertwined mechanisms of capital exchange and theorising migrants' cultural capitals as assemblages of individual and collective resources and practices shaped over time and space (Erel 2010; P. Kelly and Lusis 2006). Here, to achieve this objective, the linguistic capital transmission is conceptualised within the contexts of 'habitus', 'social field', and 'linguistic market'.

According to Bourdieusian theorisation, 'habitus' describes a socialised body whose actions and perceptions are embedded in the immanent structures of the world and the particular locality in the world of which it is a part—he describes these structures as 'social field' (Bourdieu 1977a). Habitus is a set of predispositions which, while unique to each person, are formed as a result of a complex interplay of individual and group—for instance, family, community, class—histories and trajectories (Bourdieu 1990). Cultural capital is constructed within one's habitus and according to—or against—the rules of the social field. Habitus—Bourdieu argues (in Wacquant, 1989, p. 44)—'contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense [and] value', nevertheless, the stories of immigrants often provide examples of how not every member of the field can enjoy an equal share in defining what is meaningful. Bourdieu (1977b, 651) describes linguistic capital as 'a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered'. For migrants, revaluations of their linguistic capital could occur not only as a consequence of mobility between social fields, as discussed earlier, but also in response to internal shifts on the linguistic market arising from new ideologies—for example, xenophobia—being popularised by the dominant group. Therefore, minority linguistic practices

should be analysed within the framework of historically and socially constituted power relations that dictate migrants' and their languages' positions in correspondence with what is recognised as legitimate (Luke 2003; Bourdieu 1977b). At the same time, such analyses should not assume migrants' powerlessness and submission to the dominant social structures and question whether the rules of the linguistic market and social field, indeed, strongly affect migrants' perceptions of their respective capitals.

While mobility could be seen as a condition under which immigrants' capitals are challenged and negotiated, it is also a source of capital in itself; past and present localities of settlement can 'continue to be important as sources of meaning and identity for mobile subjects' (Anthias 2007; Conradson and McKay 2007, 168). Migrants' perceptions of their community languages and their approaches to linguistic capital transmission are influenced by one's individual trajectories and dispositions, their family relations, as well as the belonging to—and mobility between—social fields that embody socio-political rules and attitudes established at a local, national or international level (Barea et al. 2010; Soong, Stahl, and Shan 2018). Mobilised identities are characterised by difference and hybridity and can be formulated as a result of the dissipation of the sense of national belonging (postnational positioning) or internalisation of multiple belongings associated with different nations (transnational positioning). Such a conceptualisation of identity breaches the dichotomy of 'here' and 'there' and, instead of associating migration with resettlement from one place to another, sees it as a flow and a constructive phenomenon (Levitt 2012). As migrants move through time and space, adopt new practices, and join networks which are situated beyond cultural, geopolitical, and ideological boundaries, they begin to formulate valuable post- and transnational capitals (Duff 2015; Saw 2018). Nonetheless, to avoid romanticising these *beyond-national* frameworks, it must be noted that migrants' levels

of postnational and transnational experience vary depending on their different degrees of cross-border mobility, the frequency of exposure to the capital validation, and the extent to which migrants' *habiti* are susceptible to change in response to involvement in diasporic and transnational networks (Nowicka 2013; Massey 1993). Therefore, there remains a question up to the extent to which any attachment to nationality and nation-states plays a significant role in shaping migrants' perceptions of their linguistic capitals and their practices of language transmission in the family.

Over the last two decades, increasing research attention has been devoted to exploring the relationship between migration, education, and community languages. While the application of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to analyse immigrants' community languages is not uncommon in empirical studies (e.g. Leopold and Shavit 2013; Levitt and Waters 2006; Moskal 2016; Welply 2017b), only a few examples from literature (Akua-Sakyiwah 2016; Devine 2009; Mu 2014) focus on the influences of the broader social field on individuals' *habiti* and the contextualisation of mobile actors' choices and practices at different stages of the process of linguistic capital transmission. The argument in this paper is developed in light of these studies and in response to King's (2016) call for the inclusion of a more diverse range of family types, languages, and social contexts in research on bilingual parenting and family language policy. The framework of transnationalism informs this study's departure from the practice of analysing immigrants as members of a single nationality group. Although, transnationalism has been applied in several studies that discuss the transmission of linguistic cultural capital at the family level and, at the same time, situate the family unit in a transnational context (Moskal and Sime 2015; Sime and Pietka-Nykaza 2015). Yet, these studies have often focused on family's transnational practices and networks post-resettlement, neglecting the family's transnational journey and its effects on parents'

cultural capital, their perceptions of enduring their home culture, and consequently, the mechanisms of cultural capital transmission that they adopt. On the other hand, scholars that do focus on parents' transnational past—for example, as they consider their language portfolios (Sims, Ellis, and Knox 2017)—see transnational capital as a mode of transmission of linguistic skills and do not pay enough attention to the role of transnational capital in developing and transforming parents' habitus—this is, not only the sense of linguistic belonging, but also the connectedness and responsiveness to the transnational social field in which capital is transferred onto children. Here, migrants' linguistic capitals are conceptualised as complex and discontinuous individualised phenomena—or, assemblages—which are shaped within the realm of social interactions and undergo transformations as they transcend national borders and static ideas of ethnic belonging and locality.

Data and methods

Inspired by the methodological transnationalism perspective, the study presented in this paper strives to offer an inclusive and context-specific methodological approach which accounts for the complexities of the changing patterns of mobility and the challenges they introduce to migration research. In order to avoid essentialising the diasporic community and equating common origins with common experiences, this study avoids static categorisations and allows the participants to define their sense of belonging and involvement in communities on their own terms. The focus is put, here, on individuals and the role of their agency and subjectivity in producing and reproducing social reality to construct their own diverse experiences and conceptualisations. Evidence used in this paper originates from 14 semi-structured interviews with parents aged 27–41 who, first, self-identify as Polish and were born or spent most of their childhood in Poland, and second, have a child (or children) in school

age who was (were) born outside of Poland, not necessarily in the UK.³ Participants came from a range of educational, occupational, linguistic backgrounds, social circles, ideological environments, and value systems, and have experienced various migration trajectories (Table 1). This information was analysed alongside parental accounts of community language maintenance and formed an essential foundation for contextualising immigrants' choices in relation to their habitus and the social fields that they had been exposed to. While gaining access to Polish immigrant parents who do not have ties with the Polish community is difficult, this research aimed for maximal diversity and a great effort has been applied to identifying immigrants who—even though they maintain certain cultural aspects they acquired in their country of origin and through the process of mobility—do not identify as members of the minority community. To achieve said diversity in the sample, participants were recruited via a variety of channels, some rooted in the Polish community (e.g. the Polish Saturday school, Polish community media) and some independent of it (e.g. newsletters distributed in British schools). The fieldwork was conducted in an East Anglian university city known for its diversity and multiculturalism and attracting immigrants regardless of the UK's changing political climate, therefore, readers are encouraged to acknowledge the peculiarities of this socio-geographical context.

[Table 1 here]

³ In this study, 'Polish immigrants' denotes those migrants who identify themselves as Polish regardless of their official nationality and whether they consider their identities as fully shaped by the Polish culture or see their 'Polishness' as a part of their postnational or transnational identity (Hall 1990).

Interviewing emerged as the preferred data collection method as, in its qualitative form, it enables identification of the diverse characteristics of the immigrant community and empowers the participants to share their own interpretations instead of subscribing to predetermined categories and expectations (Warren 2011). Interviews with participating parents consisted of two parts. The first one was aimed at gathering data on parents' backgrounds and trajectories. These discussions included questions about parents' mobility between and within nation-states before and after their migration to the UK, as well as about their family's past and current mobilities. In the part that followed, participants were asked to reflect on their experience of raising children in a setting dominated by the English language with a particular focus on their attitudes towards the maintenance of Polish at home. The interview topics explored migrants' preference regarding the language used at home, their motivations for maintaining the community language, and the factors that influenced their decisions regarding language education and affected their access to different forms of educational support. Where relevant participants were invited to communicate their perceptions of the continued role of the nation-state and transnational background in shaping their experience of mobility and resettlement (e.g. to reflect on how being identified as 'Polish' influences their attitudes towards the host society and the diasporic community). They were also encouraged to reflect on their experiences in their current city of settlement and on the mechanisms of social interaction that are particular to this locality. While following a provisional structure, the interviewer maintained an individualised approach to each participant and supported them through, for example, rephrasing questions, allowing switching between languages, recounting examples from her own life, or, where true, reassuring the participants that their perceptions and

opinions were not isolated (Dempsey 2018; Holmes et al. 2013). The semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled the introduction of reflexivity to the process of data collection and allowed the questions and discussion topics to evolve over the period of fieldwork in response to the data gathered in consecutive interviews (Gubrium and Holstein 2003). Subsequent to transcription, the interviews were coded to identify information about migrants' backgrounds and trajectories and to organise parents' reflections on the community language transmission into thematic groups that were identified as central to this research based on literature review and in the process of interviewing and transcribing—for example, 'motivations and decision making', 'home language practices', and 'diasporic community influence'.

Results and discussion

Interviews revealed a diverse and complex reality that underlies parents' approach to the use and transfer of the Polish language in the family after migration. As summarised in Table 2, the majority of interviewed parents managed to maintain Polish as a dominant language at home until children went to pre-school or reception, with the exception of those who raised their children in bi- or trilingual households. Most parents in the sample declared they were committed to speaking Polish to their children, even if children preferred replying in English. This section presents parents' motivations to maintain, or not, their community language, and explores the multiple influences that parents face during the decision-making process and the diverse capital assemblages that they bring into it. The discussion of parents' intentions is followed by the analysis of their approaches at a practical level, to ultimately, assess the extent to which parents adhere to their plans, identify educational forms and informal practices that they use, and investigate how and why these intentions and practices are negotiated, transformed,

and compromised. In this analysis, I emphasise intergenerational language transmission as a phenomenon occurring at the intersection of inheritance and environmental influences and evaluate the importance of these two sources of motivation and pressure to further the understanding of what—if anything unique—it means to be Polish in the UK.

[Table 2 here]

Motivations and values

The interviewed parents' reflections on the value of community language focused on the functional and cultural benefits of language maintenance, at the same time revealing the complexity of circumstances and environments within which these understandings of language value are shaped. A number of parents in this study acknowledged language as an essential medium of cultural heritage and patriotism. They identified their love for the motherland (Łukasz) and the pride arising from being a Polish citizen (Kasia, Julia) as inherent elements of their family's cultural being and recognised the transmission of their mother tongue as an 'added advantage' (Anita) or a 'gift' (Julia) that they felt privileged to make accessible to their children to support their understanding of culturally significant sources of information and knowledge. Nonetheless, their accounts suggest that the nostalgia they experience is a feeling of longing for something from the past—for example, they mention how Polish could enable their children to understand their favourite cartoons from childhood and the music they appreciate—rather than something that is specifically Polish.

Moreover, community language was appreciated as an enabler of intra- and intergenerational communication with people of the same linguistic background and as a potential—and worth investing in—advantage on the labour market (see Granados,

2017; Nordstrom, 2016; Riches and Curdt-Christiansen, 2010; Sime and Pietka-Nykaza, 2015). All parents, except Karolina and Alicja,⁴ mentioned that communication with grandparents and the rest of the family in Poland was one of the most important reasons for maintaining the Polish language. Kinga, Renata, Julia, and Anita reflected on their beliefs that a good command of an additional language will provide their children with more occupational choice (including jobs in Poland) and more competitive options. Interestingly, while most parents focused on the potential benefits for their children, Paulina, a translator, also appreciated the use of Polish at home as an opportunity for professional training:

I think this is also because this is my profession...it is a never-ending training for me. I constantly keep switching between languages and try to find the correct vocabulary to make sure I avoid calques. (Paulina)

In addition to the previously mentioned cultural, social, and economic values, parents in the sample observed that, in the context of globalisation, languages become mobilising resources; they facilitate the expansion of future migratory trajectories, provide access to broader cultural resources, and afford legitimacy in a wider range of social fields. The topic of return migration, or resettling in a new country, was raised in a number of interviews (Kasia, Karol, Kinga, Renata, Hania, Jakub and Magda) as a

⁴ In Karolina's case, Polish is not a necessary resource for communication with family as she moved to the UK with her mother and brother when she was 15 and her relatives speak English fluently. Nevertheless, the family does make an effort to teach Karolina's son Polish. Alicja, on the other hand, made a conscious decision to limit her son's understanding of Polish (as discussed later in this paper).

way of explaining parents' level of commitment to teaching Polish. Kinga, expressed her uncertainty about her family's future, 'We might stay here, we might go back'. Similar accounts were shared by Karol and Hania. While in most cases, commonsensically, the Polish language was seen as a tool for communication upon return to Poland, Kasia saw it as an identity marker that should be preserved regardless of the future settlement location:

Wherever we end up after Brexit, whether it is Australia, New Zealand, definitely not Poland, I want him to know that he's Polish, he's supposed to understand Polish and his roots, traditions. (Kasia)

Contrarily, where there were no intentions for return migration, parents' motivation to maintain the community language was negatively affected. Jakub admitted that they preferred to focus on children's English-language skills, which are of immediate use:

As of today, we are not planning to move back to Poland, so there is no pressure for children to know the language at a very high level...if at some point, we need to move back, that's when we'll start getting worried about this. (Jakub)

The sample presented in this research also suggests an association between richer parental language portfolios and intentions to perpetuate the community language to the next generation. Parents who communicate fluently in more than two languages—acquired either before migration or as a result of transnational mobility—were more likely, than other interviewed parents, to see maintenance of Polish as an opportunity to add an extra language to their children's language portfolios and include discussions of

the benefits of bi- or multilingualism in their valorisation of Polish. Moreover, in the case of Paulina's, Julia's, and Anita's mixed marriages, their non-Polish-speaking partner's strong linguistic backgrounds seemed to positively contribute to the general state of literacy environment created at home.

While the motivations discussed above reflect the reasoned nature of parents' decision-making, the participants also provided accounts of the role of emotions in assigning the value to languages. A few female parents reflected on choosing Polish to communicate with their children because it felt more natural (Paulina), more suited for emotional expression (Agata), and—thanks to higher levels of fluency—allowed for a more intimate connection (Patrycja). Their reflections provide examples of how language can enable transmission of emotional capital (Nowotny 1981); these mothers teach emotional awareness and pursue the state of emotional well-being as they use the mode of expression that is naturally embedded in their ways of thinking and feeling—this is, in their *habiti*. Nevertheless, it can be a case that upon migration the acquired language begins to dominate 'emotional practices' (Scheer 2012, 193). Alicja, for example, admitted to dreaming and writing her journal in English, and consequently feeling more natural speaking that language, even though at the time of migration in her early twenties she struggled to hold a conversation in English.

Furthermore, although it has been suggested in literature (e.g. Kenner et al. 2007; Moskal and Sime 2015; Orellana 2009) that, in the context of a new linguistic market, children's language and cultural competencies help them become 'cultural experts' and lead to renegotiations of traditional roles and hierarchies, this sample and evidence from Jamal Al-deen and Windle's (2017) study suggest otherwise. Parents identified that their knowledge of the heritage language can be used to reclaim their authoritative position at home. Being accepted by their children as language experts in

the community language can boost parents emotional and linguistic capital, as Anita reflects:

Polish gives me a kind of linguistic advantage over my child, so that I'm not always an immigrant/ESL speaker to her, who maybe sometimes says interesting things, but the ways she says it leaves a lot to be desired [laughs] I will never be a role model to her when it comes to English...so Polish is my way to regain this authority. (Anita)

Nevertheless, the data collected in this study evinces that what the majority may consider worth investing in, for others could mean perpetuating values and capitals that they would prefer to break up with or feel no longer attached to. Several of the interviewed parents (Hania, Jakub and Magda) associated the process of assimilation in a new country with the natural erosion of commitment to enduring homeland, which, as they revealed, resulted in decreased levels of attention to language maintenance. It could be argued that, in the case of such families, the gradual adaptations of 'national' cultural capital lead to a formulation of postnational capital. Over time, as parents gain a better understanding of the new social field and acquire capitals that have more legitimate currency among the dominant society, they may—sometimes unconsciously—abandon some of the cultural traits and practices that constituted their social interactions before migration. However, this does not suggest a complete abandonment of elements of one's cultural capital, rather, it emphasises the transmutable character of mobile actors' capital.

On the other hand, as opposed to gradual transformation, the discontinuity in linguistic capital transfer in the family can also occur as a consequence of the parents' negative feelings towards the home country and the unwillingness to involve the

younger generation in the culture that they do not share, as it was in Alicja's case. Her example shows that migration and mobility do not only serve as a context for capital transformation, but they become enablers of deliberate departure from the cultural past:

I have a rather weird and twisted attitude towards Poland and the Polish people. It is rooted in my family's ideologies...These are my personal decisions and perhaps [pause] I don't know if I will regret them, it might be that in the future I will. (Alicja)

The examples presented here reveal how parents' motivations for maintaining the community language in the family are shaped in correspondence with the different approaches to enduring homeland and embracing resettlement environments (see Nowicka 2013 on migrants' social positionings). Migrants use both time and space references when discussing their migratory journey; they discuss Poland as a physical location that they can visit, return to, or abandon, at the same time, they also acknowledge it, often nostalgically, as a symbol of their past—and perhaps future experiences—while associating the UK with their present status. Cultural capital and perceptions of its value undergo transformations as a result of mobility and, for some, the participation in transnational or postnational fields. Moreover, parents' discussions indicate that linguistic capital transmission goes beyond the process of sharing and acquiring knowledge and skills relevant for engaging in social interactions; language is seen as a cultural phenomenon and a badge of personal and ethnic identity (Parke et al. 2002). Nonetheless, while sharing 'traditions' and 'culture' seems to form an important part of the process of bringing up children in Polish immigrant families, the parents did not offer any definition or examples of the cultural values that they associate with being Polish (e.g. religious beliefs), suggesting that what they think of as 'Polish culture'

might be more related to their personal experiences of being brought up a certain way, than with nationality or regionality. The language also both constitutes a part of the individual's emotional habitus and serves as an important tool enabling emotional well-being and development of connections. It, therefore, should be recognised as a cultural, functional, and emotional phenomenon. The Polish immigrant cohort demonstrates large heterogeneity in approaches to language valorisation and the maintenance of community language (cf. Curdt-Christiansen 2009), supporting a case for more research applying maximum variation sampling and exploring the difference between members of migrant groups instead of seeking to essentialise through accentuating similarities.

Decision making in context

Reasoning and valorisations established at the level of the family unit are shaped and reshaped by external influences and pressures. For an immigrant, the social field consists of social relations with the host society, the minority community, and the networks of people and ideas constituted in the country of origin and transnationally. These social relations, concurrently, are situated within a broader framework of sociocultural hierarchal systems and geopolitical dependencies. While languages carry inevitable markers of cultures and societies from which they originate, it is up to the members of the social field to determine whether such markers are seen as threatening, neutral, or benign. On the one hand, immigrants are aware of the functional and symbolic power of the dominant language; on the other, though, they have to negotiate their perceptions of linguistic capital and language use within a web of contrasting expectations from the Polish community. This section explores the extent to which parents recognise the broader socio-political context of their migration as a factor affecting their language transmission decisions and practices, in comparison to smaller-scale social interactions.

Parents reflected on rethinking and validating their decisions as they observed other parents in the diasporic community. For example, Kinga's commitment to maintaining Polish as a dominant language at home comes from her admiration for her friend who also lives in the UK and brings up her children here. At her friend's house, there is a rule that only Polish can be spoken. According to Kinga, this practice works, as the children have no problems with the English language at school, but they also never bring English home and speak very correct Polish. She is considering introducing this rule in her house because she has also seen examples of families that neglected Polish what causes problems with maintaining family connections and hampers progress at school:

It got so bad, that at one point the kid returned the phone and said he wouldn't speak to his grandma because he didn't know how to phrase his answers in Polish. We'd like to avoid this...In one other case, an 8-year-old girl had to go back to Poland to live with her grandma, after growing up here. She had to move one or two years down in school because she couldn't read and write in Polish. (Kinga)

For Agata, observing other parents' negligence of community language education served as a form of validation of her own decision making. She had a chance to see what would have happened if she was not so persistent at maintaining Polish at home, and she felt encouraged to continue her practices to avoid the problems that she observed in her friend's children:

My friend who lives in France has children...well, it didn't affect our decision, because we've already made our choices. But, when we were both visiting Poland, our sons were 4-years-old then, and when the kids were

playing, her son couldn't understand what the rest was saying to him. Then, his grandma came, and he couldn't understand her. It was terrible. (Agata)

These accounts of parents' conclusion drawing based on observations of other parents were complemented by stories of less subtle pressures from within the Polish community. The data suggests that there is little space for hybridity and selectivity in decision making and that the dominant narrative among Polish immigrants imposes the maintenance of the Polish language as a means of protecting the 'national capital'. Immigrant parents, nevertheless, tend to make autonomous decisions that often involve only partial enduring of homeland and national capital. Some of them admit that the 'you're either with us or against us' rhetoric within the Polish community discourages them from engaging with the diaspora and using its resources, even if they are committed to perpetuating the Polish culture and language. According to several interviewed parents (Kinga, Hania, Alicja), it is not uncommon to hear suggestive comments from other parents who do not share the same approach towards the maintenance of the Polish language:

My husband has a Polish colleague at work and he is often asked, 'So, your wife teaches your son Polish, right? He visits Poland?'. It is hard in the Polish community, and that's why my friends, even if they are Polish, they are usually from mixed marriages and don't really practice this linguistic purism. There are other options and people have their reasons for their decisions...Several people have told me, 'If I was your daughter, I would hate a mom who doesn't let me speak Polish'. I don't forbid my son from speaking Polish. (Alicja)

On the other end of the spectrum, Kinga felt pressured by other immigrant parents to focus on her daughter's English language abilities, as these were regarded by them as essential for functioning in the English-dominated environment:

Too many [Polish] parents here make the mistake of regarding the English language as sacrosanct. It really annoys me when I meet friends who have this kind of attitude, and they ask, 'How is Joanna? Does she speak English?', and I say, 'Yes, but we speak Polish at home'. And there is always a bit of tension. (Kinga)

What may seem counterintuitive, perhaps, the discussions of influences and pressures from the British community were absent from the majority of the interviewees' accounts, suggesting lack of explicit impact of the dominant society's discourses on parental choices. Apart from Alicja, who mentioned hiring a British nanny with a negative attitude towards late English language acquisition among immigrant children, only Kasia, Karol, and Kinga recalled receiving any feedback regarding community language use from the members of the British society. In their cases, however, the 'advisors' (teachers, doctors, other parents) unanimously endorsed the maintenance of the Polish language at home:

They were very supportive in his new school...It was a pleasant surprise to me to hear that they are not against foreigners and respect our home languages. (Kasia)

Instead of seeing these observations and feedback as isolated influences, this paper suggests focusing on the interactions between parental habitus, capital, and the social field and recognising them as constituents of unique and individualised decision-

making contexts. I offer, here, that the processes of symbolic distinction and othering, while embedded in the ways individuals define their social positioning and linguistic belonging in relation to possessed cultural capital and the dominant linguistic market, do not have to form a central part of these decision-making contexts. When discussing the maintenance of Polish in family, the interviewed parents did not offer much reflection on the interactions with wider British society or any pressures they could feel arising from media discourses. This was probably due to the research project being conducted in a very culturally and linguistically diverse area of the UK. While I do not suggest that the possible hidden role of global discourse and social conditioning should be neglected or underplayed, I aim to highlight that it should not be assumed either. Instead of reinforcing the image of Polish migrants as a group of oppressed ‘Other’ trying to fit into the workings of an unfamiliar social setting, the data collected in this research revealed the more positive aspects of immigrants lives and brought attention to migrants’ agency and positive interaction with the host society often forgotten in migration research.

Educational practices: Polish language acquisition

Parents’ perceptions of value and priority are reshaped in response to the social pressures and influences, as discussed above, as well as the challenges arising from the access to and use of different formal and informal language education practices (Barglowski 2018). The accessibility of educational forms of studying and practising Polish is dependent on parents’ and children’s individual dispositions, opinions, economic standing, and structures of support that they developed. Almost all of the interviewed parents (except Alicja) made some attempts to ensure their children’s involvement in learning Polish—either using formal or informal forms of education, or a combination of the two. The discussion presented here moves beyond the widely-

researched questions around the provision of supplementary schools and their role in community language maintenance in minority families (Creese et al. 2006; Francis, Archer, and Mau 2010; Lytra 2012; Nordstrom 2016; Tsolidis and Kostogriz 2008; Walters 2011), to incorporate other alternative educational practices (such as private lessons and online courses) available to parents, which appear under-researched.

Enrolling children in the Polish Saturday School (PSS) was the most commonly mentioned practice. Agata and Patrycja saw the Polish school as an opportunity for their children to learn how to read and write, which are complementary skills to those acquired at home—primarily listening and speaking. Paulina and Renata acknowledged the PSS for exposing the children—both in the classroom and outside when they interact with their peers—to new sources of vocabulary. Paulina also noticed that her daughter drew inspirations from these peer interaction, as she recognised that other people her age also want to learn Polish and communicate in this language. Moreover, according to Renata, the formality of school teaching—with assessments, homework, and grades—provides an extra source of motivation and encouragement for parents and their children to work on the language and explore the home country's culture, history, and traditions.

Nevertheless, the PSS is not a solution that suits every parent and child. Classes there take place every Saturday for several hours, and two parents (Jakub, Anita) expressed their reluctance to add another day of compulsory classes to their children's already busy schedules. Other parents (Karolina, Hania, Paulina) admitted that, even though they wished to enrol their children in the PSS's programme, they were faced with a choice between the school and other activities (e.g. football practices) happening at the same time, and decided against the school, as they imagined that there would be

other ways for their children to acquire Polish. Nonetheless, only Paulina looked for alternatives and hired a private language tutor for her son.

Another reason parents hesitated to choose the PSS was their doubt about the school's curriculum and teaching effectiveness. Jakub and Magda confessed that they would have been more likely to enrol their children in the PSS if the school focused solely on the Polish language, rather than incorporating history, geography, and religious studies in its curriculum. According to Jakub, these subjects are sufficiently covered in British schools. Julia considered the PSS's offer, however, her preliminary research cast doubt on the school's effectiveness in teaching:

I heard bad reviews...Kids have been going for years and their Polish is really basic, they don't see an improvement. One mom...I think her kids were going there for three years and what they later picked up in 6 months from [their private tutor] is not even comparable to the three years they spent in the classroom. (Julia)

Julia, nevertheless, acknowledged the difference between private and classroom teaching. She reflected that the differences in students' progress might be arising from different group sizes rather than the school's curriculum or teachers' competence level.

Moreover, one's financial situation turned out to be an additional factor limiting parents' access to the PSS's offer, as Kasia noted:

As a single mom working only part-time, I have a limited household budget, and I can't afford to pay for the school. I would love to. It's very important to me, but I don't have the money. (Kasia)

Kasia felt trapped in a vicious circle. As a single mom, she is a sole breadwinner in her household and spends long hours at work, therefore, the time that she can spend with her son and use to teach him Polish is limited. The lack of a second parent at home does not only constrict her financially but also limits her son's exposure to Polish as he cannot overhear conversations between parents. Even though maintaining her community language is important to Kasia, her family situation and financial conditions—social and economic capital, respectively—restrict her choice of language education forms for her son, both formal and informal ones.

Private language lessons, while not as popular as attending the PSS, were a solution chosen by three parents. Karol chose this option as he was committed to providing Polish language teaching even before his children reached the age at which they can start attending the PSS. Karol's son also attended a few sessions with a speech therapist, to practice Polish pronunciation. As discussed above, Paulina's choice was caused by difficulties in scheduling other extra-curricular activities, and in the case of Julia, her decision was motivated by the negative opinions she heard about the school.

A number of parents decided to complement or substitute these classroom practices—whether in the PSS or with a private tutor—with other, less formal forms of language education. For example, Paulina encouraged her daughter to attend a Polish scout group and a book club. In addition, she attends the Polish mass with her children, which she sees as 'an additional opportunity for language exposure'.

Reading books in Polish before bedtime (Agata, Łukasz, Patrycja, Hania, Paulina, Jakub), encouraging children to read in Polish themselves (Agata, Karol, Patrycja), and providing activity books brought from Poland (Agata, Karolina, Kinga) were some other popular practices that parents introduced to their homes to support their children's language education. In addition, watching Polish television and cartoons

was mentioned by several parents (Łukasz, Renata, Paulina, Anita) as an effective practice for developing children's vocabulary and widening the range of topics that they can comfortably engage with.

While multilingualism creates new challenges, it can also encourage greater care and sense of responsibility for the language. In Patrycja's, Renata's, and Paulina's families, children are not only exposed to Polish, but they are also constantly encouraged to improve their skills through everyday interactions; when they make a mistake or start to mix languages, they are corrected and asked to repeat. Although more parents reflected on similar methods, only these three seemed to be committed to using this practice persistently and treat it as an important teaching tool.

Parents' and children's individual dispositions, opinions, economic standing, and structures of support they develop are all important factors in the transition from a decision about language transmission to the implementation of certain educational practices leading to the desired outcome. These factors, however, are not fixed and the outcome that the family achieves on the spectrum of language maintenance/non-maintenance can shift as a result of a change of intentions or following a loss or acquisition of capital. Therefore, the process of community language maintenance in the family—the journey between setting an intended outcome and working towards it—should be seen as dynamic and capital-dependent.

Conclusion

Findings in this article have shown that community language acquisition in migration context occurs at the intersection of inheritance and environment and highlighted the diversity of experiences within the migrant community. The study presented here emphasises the importance of parental involvement in their children's

education and parents' autonomy in making decisions regarding encouraging learning outside of the mainstream curriculum. Crucially, case studies reported in this article confirm the unstable character of the process of linguistic capital transmission and acquisition and bring attention to the variety of factors—such as limited economic resources, participation in transnational networks, connectedness to family and friends in the country of parents' origin—that shape assemblages of experiences unique to individuals and not universal between members of a given ethnic or nationality group. This shows that, in order to understand the complexity of migrants' experiences of language, research must recognise the ways in which different forms of capital interact and avoid analyses that separate out singular factors of migrants' lives of instead of acknowledging their inextricability from the context (cf. Chung and Zhang 2005). Following the analysis of parents' motivations, decision making, and practical approaches to language transmission within the framework of Bourdieu's theory of practice, I identify four key aspects of linguistic capital's interactivity with other forms of capital and explain how they result in different outcomes on the spectrum to maintenance/non-maintenance:

Linguistic capital acquisition can be enabled or hindered by other forms of capital.

Parents', or family's, high levels of economic capital can stimulate the expansion of the community language skillset as it enables (as a result of capital exchange) greater access to educational practices. Moreover, parents who enjoy higher levels of cultural and social capital—within a specific social field—are in a better position to make informed decisions about their children's language education and respond to difficulties should they arise. On the other hand, capital acquisition requires a time investment, and in situations where a certain kind of capital, other than linguistic, is prioritised in the

family, marginalisation of heritage language learning can be observed. Therefore, other forms of capital can make the acquisition of linguistic capital more accessible but can also lead to the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen and Morgia 2018; Barglowski 2018). Community language acquisition requires time and systematic inculcation which—due to limited resources—not all parents are able to provide. Scarce economic resources can push immigrant parents into taking multiple jobs, constricting the time they can spend with their children, and therefore, limiting the transmission of both emotional and linguistic capital (cf. Gillies 2006; Reay 2000). Single mothers provide a particularly interesting case study. They take almost sole responsibility for both the provision and transfer of the capital in the family, suggesting a case for the consideration of the gendered labour aspect of language transfer.

Heritage language skills acquired in different contexts complement and interact with each other to stimulate higher levels of capital expansion. Parents recognised the need to complement linguistic capital acquired at home with other forms of language exposure and teaching. They acknowledged that formal forms of education, such as private tutoring and attending the Polish school, are essential for developing reading and writing skills—which are not commonly learned from family interactions—and for providing a greater range of topics and vocabulary that children are familiar with and able to discuss. This interaction between linguistic capitals acquired in different contexts can be described as a process of simultaneous complementation and stimulation. Language skills acquired at home enable capital expansion in the context of formal educational practices, while knowledge and skills brought from the classroom environment stimulate more effective learning at home. It could be argued that most meaningful outcomes in heritage language learning can be achieved when parents and educators work in cooperation to recognise, aggregate, and encourage the use of the

different language skills that children acquire in multiple contexts. Nevertheless, these educational contexts are built into a wider social field and parents' access to these contexts independent on their exposure to and perceptions of the pressures arising from the diaspora and the host society.

Multilingual skills and transnational capital stimulate recognition of heritage linguistic capital in family and enhance its transmission. Parents from multilingual and transnational backgrounds showed high appreciation for their heritage languages and expressed their desire to raise multilingual children, with Polish being one of the languages spoken. Interestingly, in case of such more transnationally-connected migrants, the transfer of community language skills is often claimed to be motivated by the desire to teach a child an additional language, not necessarily the home language. While migrants' reserves of capital can be devalued in response to movement between unfamiliar social fields, individuals can also possess agency to effectively adapt and reimagine their cultural capital as they relocate between socio-spatial contexts (Yemini, Maxwell, and Mizrachi 2018). The development of migrant-specific or transnational capital—stimulated by immigrants' negotiations of their lived language experiences between home and the broader environment—does not have to imply abandoning the reserves of capital acquired before joining the new linguistic market. Nonetheless, the immigrants who adopt postnational positionings may decide to actively devalue their community languages and discontinue linguistic traditions between generation. The pressures on cultural capital come not only from the dominant society's perceptions of legitimacy, but also from revaluations within the minority community and one's own habitus.

The linguistic capital valorisations are shaped with reference to time and temporality.

Parents' perceptions of linguistic capital are linked to their past trajectories and language experiences and shaped by their perceptions of the future value of the heritage language in their and their children's lives (Forlot 2009). Immigrants admitted to their decisions being affected by the feelings of nostalgia for home, but also their expectations of potential mobility or lack of mobility between linguistic markets and social fields in the future. Languages are markers of geographical belongings, but they also form time references to certain periods in immigrants' lives. When the community language is seen as left 'home', it is left in the country of origin, but also in the past. The new, dominant language can become, then, the language of the future and progress in a new space and a new period of life.

While, undeniably, the position of migrants and their languages in the UK has become unstable and vulnerable in the new, post-referendum socio-political climate (Kelly 2017), the findings of this research suggest avoiding assumptions about migrants' oppressed position and focusing instead on their reported experiences which, as this paper shows, are often influenced more by the family- and local-level interactions than the larger scale social mechanisms. Nevertheless, although the analysis presented here emphasises migrants' agencies, the power of their individual capital assemblages, and their ability to adapt to new conditions in the social field without seeing this process as a struggle, it does not neglect the tacit structural constraints that, while hardly visible in this research context, might be of larger importance to other communities and localities. Therefore, I echo King's (2016) call for the inclusion of a variety of contexts in family language policy studies, and to add to it, I suggest that more attention should be paid to considering how parents make a move from deciding on their home language policy to actual language transmission practices. Although the

experiences and opinions presented in this paper have limited generalisability outside of the study context, they reveal a large diversity within the Polish immigrant cohort and, very importantly, show how for Polish migrants preserving cultural resources and knowledge in the family is motivated more by their commitment to enduring their past than enduring their national belonging. Moreover, this research brings attention to the agency and freedom of choice that Polish immigrants in the studied context appear to enjoy and perhaps provokes future research into the extent to which these feelings of agency are truly embedded in migrants' lives and thinking, as opposed to being performed. It also highlights the value of maximum variety sampling in migration studies and invites further research that focuses on diversity and difference rather than identification of patterns across immigrant cohorts. The diversity and complexity of immigrant parents' experiences revealed in this article could also serve as a starting point for future research on the consequences of parental language education decision making on their children's sense of identity and social positioning and on their perceptions of the role of language in shaping their social interactions and the relationship with their parents.

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Table 1. Parents' educational, occupational, social, linguistic, and migratory circumstances.

	Parent's name (gender)	Reasons for migration	Other migrations*	Educational background	Occupational background (post- migration)	Foreign languages	Social circle and family
1	Kasia (f)	job dissatisfaction, seeking change, language practice	YES	A-level equivalent (PL)	low-paid service jobs, community-supported employment	basic English at arrival, conscious effort to learn	single mother, her son does not know his father, mostly Polish and some international friendships
2	Agata (m)	job seeking, financial reasons	YES	master's (PL) and some non-degree higher education experience (UK)	supervisory and then executive positions in the service sector	basic English before first migration (Sweden), communicative at arrival in England, conscious effort to learn	in a long-term relationship with her children's father (Polish)
3	Łukasz (m)	financial reasons	NO	bachelor's (PL)	casual low-paid jobs, then, employment in customer service	confident English at arrival, improved at work	had Polish friends in England before migration, works in a multicultural environment, Polish wife
4	Karol (m)	financial reasons, Poland joining the EU	NO	master's (PL)	casual low-paid jobs, then, employment in a large educational agency	communicative English at arrival, improved naturally	majority of friends are Polish, Polish wife
5	Karolina (f)	family decision motivated by financial reasons	NO	E2E, some non- degree higher education experience (UK)	service and customer service sector jobs, then, administrator at a charity	basic English at arrival, low confidence level, improved at work	single mother, her mom helps with raising the child, both Polish- and English-speaking friends
6	Patrycja (f)	relationship, language practice	NO	bachelor's (PL), studies for a postgraduate degree (UK)	service sector jobs	very good command of German, took an intensive course in English before moving to England	Polish husband, recently started to make friends with other Polish mothers in her area
7	Kinga (f)	financial reasons, job seeking	NO	master's (PL)	low-paid service jobs	good understanding of spoken and written English, problems with speaking, improved at work	had Polish friends in England before migration, Polish husband, majority of friends are Polish
8	Renata (f)	financial reasons, job seeking, search for more independence	NO	master's (PL)	low-paid jobs, then, coordinator at an engineering company; part- time: Polish as a foreign language teacher, presenter at Polish community media	communicative English at arrival, took ESOL courses, some knowledge of French	her brother had lived to England before her migration, Polish husband
9	Hania (f)	job offer in England, seeking change	NO	master's (PL), studies for a postgraduate degree (UK)	health care assistant, then, teaching assistant	very good English at arrival, knows Spanish and some Russian	Polish husband, her brother lives in the same city in England

10	Paulina (f)	relationship	YES	master's (PL), postgraduate qualifications (UK)	customer service job, then, student advisor at a higher education institution, currently, part-time translator (flexible job to be able to take care of children)	majoried in English and minored in French at university (PL)	British husband, international friends
11	Jakub (m) & Magda (f)	M: supporting a family member already in England J: job seeking, observations of other migrants	NO	both: A-level equivalent (PL)	M: low-paid service jobs, then, supervisory position in a housekeeping department J: low-paid service jobs	M: basic English at arrival J: no knowledge of English at arrival, 4-5 months of language lessons in the UK	no close friends within the Polish community
12	Julia (f)	seeking change and 'cultural experience', job offers in England	YES	medical degree (PL, taught in English)	doctor (training phase)	fluent English at arrival, communicative Spanish, some knowledge of Italian	Ecuadorian husband who grow up in the US, her parents live in the US, international friends, a number of family members live abroad and are married to partner of different nationality
13	Alicja (f)	relationship	NO	master's (PL), therapy qualifications (UK)	Polish language and literature teacher in an IB school, then, librarian	elementary English at arrival, fluent French	British husband, her sister lives in England, barely stays in touch with her family in Poland, most of her friends (Polish or not) are in mixed marriages
14	Anita (f)	job offer in England	YES	PhD (FR)	consultant for a software company, then, program manager	fluent English and French at arrival	French husband, International friends (mostly French and Swiss), recently started to look for friends within the Polish community

Names used in the table are pseudonyms.

** any experiences of migration before moving to the UK or in-between long-term stays in the UK (including return migrations)*

Table 2. Polish language use in family as reported by parents interviewed in this study.

	Parent's name	Dominant language at home before pre-school	Language Polish parent(s) use(s) with child	Language child(ren) currently use(s) at home with Polish parent(s)	Child's frequency of travel to Poland	Communication with grandparents
1	Kasia	PL	PL	PL & EN	~ 1/year	frequent
2	Agata	PL	PL	PL	~ 1/year	frequent
3	Łukasz	PL	PL	PL & EN	~ 1/year	frequent
4	Karol	PL	PL	PL	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
5	Karolina	PL	PL & EN	EN preferred	never	<i>not mentioned</i>
6	Patrycja	PL	PL	PL	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
7	Kinga	PL	PL	PL	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
8	Renata	PL	PI	PL	~ 1/year	frequent
9	Hania	PL	mostly EN	EN preferred	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
10	Paulina	PL & EN	PL	PL	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
11	Jakub & Magda	PL	mostly EN	EN preferred	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
12	Julia	PL, EN & ES	PL & EN	PL & EN	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>
13	Alicja	PL & EN	mostly EN	EN preferred	once, at age of 2.5	restricted
14	Anita	PL & FR	PL	PL & EN	~ 1/year	<i>not mentioned</i>